Little Hope Is Seen for U.S.-French Base Talks

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PARIS, Oct. 12—Talks between American representatives and the French government concerning the reactivation of American military bases in France in case of war will be resumed next week. But nobody expects them to get anywhere.

The United States would like to maintain the bases in a standby condition, so that they could be put into immediate service in case of a crisis. The French are adamant against accepting this.

A possible alternative might be for France to keep up the bases on behalf of NATO, to which she still tenuously belongs. Since France will not accept American supplies or American maintenance crews on her soil, even on the standby basis, this would be far from satisfactory, but, in the U.S. view, it would be better than nothing.

However, no optimism is discernible here that France will permit even this. She will not accept American payments for the cost of keeping the bases ready, and she is not prepared to pay the considerable sums herself.

In fact, the general impression among NATO members is that France has no intention of participating in paying for any of the costs involved in moving NATO installations from her territory.

The United States has not yet made any official demand for compensation, but has simply intimated to the French government that it is reserving its position on this matter.

The negative result expected from next week's discussions is indicated by the fact that apparently not more than two or three more meetings will be held on problems arising from the ouster of the bases.

On some other questions, a glimmer of optimism can be entertained since France is interested in retaining some advantages of NATO membership—for instance, participation in the radar warning system and sharing of intelligence.

This might be traded off for continuation of overflight rights. Their cancellation would be embarrasing to NATO in general, and in particular to Italy, whose planes would have to make a long detour to reach NATO territory if they could not cross France.

It is still not clear what will happen to the pipeline which crosses France to Germany. The French have indicated no interest in buying it, and even if they continue to maintain it themselves, it will be necessary to construct an alternative pipeline somewhere because of the uncertainty over whether or not France will automatically join a war which would involve other NATO members.

Meanwhile, American authorities are working hard to pull everything out of France by the April 1, 1967, deadline unofficially mentioned by the French. The 800,000 tons of material in France has already been reduced by about half, but it is not certain that the move can be completed by the target date. However, the French are not expected to be sticky about allowing some leeway on this point.